

Thematic Discussions: Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice  
Statement on behalf of World Society of Victimology

UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, April 24, 2007

Honorable Chair and Member States, I speak on behalf of the World Society of Victimology (WSV) which exists to advance, research and practice for victims.

More than one billion persons will be victims of crime across the world this year. 3000 persons a minute. They will suffer loss, harm and suffering at the hands of the perpetrator and often further trauma if they cooperate with the criminal justice system. Their families, witnesses and others who aid them, are also left in the shadows.

Such progress as has been made since the adoption of the UN Declaration on Basic Principles of Justice for Victims in 1985 has occurred primarily by governments in Western Europe, North America and now countries like Japan.

With few exceptions, it is still a minority of victims who will be lucky enough to receive fair treatment and support. Even fewer will get reparation and fewer still will be able to participate in the criminal justice process in a manner consistent with UN norms.

Law enforcement must be first in aid with the help of victim support and crisis intervention. Prosecutors must provide opportunities for victim involvement. Public officials should create laws and policies that allow for victims to be heard. Judges should listen and respond with care. All who work with victims should be trained and educated in effective interventions. The International Organization for Victim Assistance is there to work with you on these tasks through training and standards and monitoring but much more is needed.

Let me help you appreciate what 3000 victims a minute looks like. If only ten percent of those victimizations were sexual assaults on women, it means that at least 100 million women will be sexually assaulted this year. That means that every year the magnitude of the horror of the sexual assaults that occurred in the Rwandan genocide occurs in the world but multiplied by 100. Yes every year and multiplied by one hundred.

It is not just the magnitude that is the tragedy but that it does not need to be like that. But more than just responding to victims, we should reduce the number of victims – let's copy the UN agencies that have set targets – reduce the one billion by 50% within ten years. You say not realizable but some of the materials for this thematic discussion show how crime can be prevented and much more exists.

My recent book – Less Law, More Order - uses the work of authoritative entities such as the World Health Organization, the Division on the Advancement of Women and UN Habitat. Less Law, More Order confirms that violent victimization is preventable, it can be reduced significantly and victims assisted. It provides this material so voters, taxpayers and policy makers can understand it.

WHO, DAW and UN Habitat are putting their money where their mouth is. You need to do the same but better than or with them by spearheading the reduction of victimization. You must invest now in the transformations needed to make the prevention of victimization and support for victims your explicit and primary objective. Despite many laudable initiatives, victims remain the orphans of government policy even in affluent countries. Yet victims are the central reason for your work and must be treated as such.

UNICEF has become a household name for its success in transformations relating to improving the situation of children in the world by consolidating a comprehensive convention. We invite you to develop targets and stop multiplying conventions by adopting an overarching convention that would provide for reduction and support for victims while respecting the rights of offenders and the public.

We call on you to commit four acts of justice here by making:

- Targets for the reduction of victimization as the central part of your strategic plan with a strategy to monitor achievements
- A financial target of ten percent of the resources of the Secretariat to implement what works to reduce victimization and enhance services for victims and to call on Member States to do the same
- A commitment to implement standards and norms relating to the prevention of victimization and victim issues, including using the questionnaires and considering a comprehensive convention for transformation
- The 2010 Congress a World Summit on Innovation and Transformation for Less Crime, devoting sub-themes to
  - implementing integrated and comprehensive crime prevention
  - implementing services and principles of justice for victims
  - implementing evidence based approaches to solving crime problems

We are pleased to share information with you on how to make a difference on our web site. I am personally pleased to share with you news of my new organization in Canada committed to get knowledge used to reduce crime – the Institute for the Prevention of Crime at the University of Ottawa.

Irvin Waller,

[www.world-society-victimology.org](http://www.world-society-victimology.org)

For further information on:

- training and standard setting for victim assistance – contact [john@iovahelp.org](mailto:john@iovahelp.org)  
[www.iovahelp.org](http://www.iovahelp.org)
- for what does and does not work and how to implement it - Waller, Irvin 2006, *Less Law, More Order: The Truth about Reducing Crime*, Praeger
- what works to reduce crime for Canada - contact [irvin.waller@uottawa.ca](mailto:irvin.waller@uottawa.ca) –  
[www.prevention-crime.ca](http://www.prevention-crime.ca)

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